



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



HONOR OUR MILITARY CHILDREN

April has been designated as the "Month of the Military Child," a time to honor military youth in communities who have been impacted by deployments, as well as the unique opportunities and challenges that all military children face. SDDVA has on display at the Soldiers and Sailors Building in Pierre the American Legion Auxiliaries "Military Child's Table Setting."

When an Air Force officer was asked what he needed while deployed, his request was simple, "Please don't send cookies, care packages or socks. Just take care of our children."

The Potted Flower Plant symbolizes that the children of our deployed may flower and flourish where they are planted.

The Hand Spade recognizes that the military children may be transplanted to a new location, any place at a moment's notice. They must acclimate themselves to a new school, new friends, and possibly a new culture.

The Birthday Cake and Unlit Candles symbolize birthday's and special events that their deployed loved one will miss while they are away.

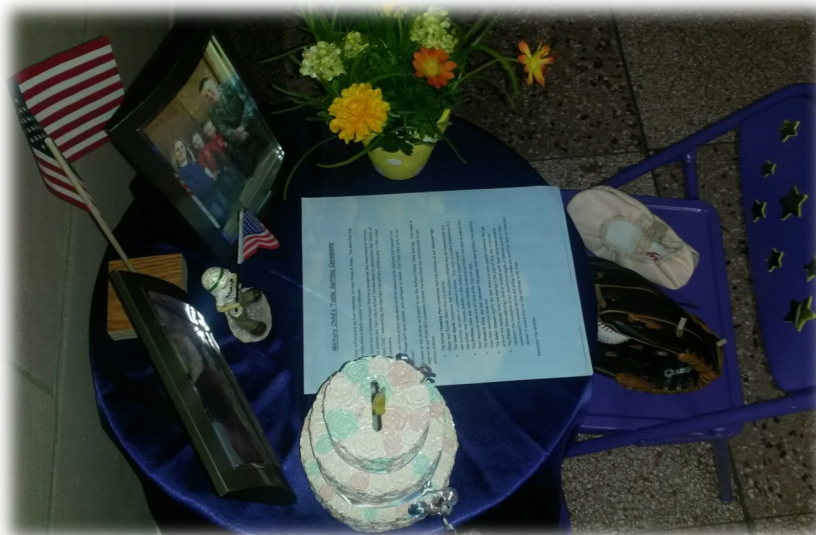
The Baseball Glove and Ball represent the games they have without the cheering from their deployed loved one.

The Ballet Slippers signify that there were many special occasions that go without the deployed loved one sharing in the joys of that day, in person.

The Family Photo, depicting a child or children with their uniformed parents, represents the foundation of our country's strength of families united in their commitment to national service and willing to make any sacrifice, both at home and abroad, to ensure that our flag continues to fly free.

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Remember the children.

MJFSV HOME RECEIVES SAFE FACILITY AWARD

The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home was awarded the 2017 Safe Facility Award by the Senior Crimestoppers Program for ensuring a ZERO TOLERANCE TO CRIME environment for residents, family members, and employees.

The Senior Housing Crime Prevention Foundation (SHCPF) provides safe and secure living environments for our nation's senior housing, HUD communities and veterans home residents through the administration of the nationally-acclaimed Senior Crimestoppers program. Senior

Crimestoppers is a nationwide crime prevention program educating and safeguarding against theft, abuse, and neglect.



ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY QUALIFY FOR REDUCED TUITION RATES

Active duty service members enrolled in distance courses offered by all six public universities in South Dakota will soon qualify for a reduced tuition rate. As approved this week by the South Dakota Board of Regents, the new rate is effective beginning in the summer 2018 term.

The new tuition rate is \$250 per credit hour, compared to a regular internet course rate of \$335.

In December, the regents approved a pilot program offered by Dakota State University at Madison for active duty military members taking online courses. The rate was set at \$250 per credit hour to equal a federal tuition assistance benefit for service members, which is capped at \$250 per credit hour.

University officials across the state later recommended setting a consistent statewide tuition rate for active duty military students who take online courses.

"Following action on the DSU pilot, finance officers at the six public universities agreed \$250 per credit hour is competitive and recommended it be adopted as the rate for internet-delivered courses throughout the system," said Monte Kramer, the regents' system vice president of finance and administration.



VA ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO IMPROVE DELIVERY OF SERVICES

With a commitment to ensure veterans receive quicker access to specialty rehabilitation services and equipment, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently implemented a rapid response team to expand staffing and training, increase communication directly with veterans and improve processes to reduce and eliminate the backlog of pending requests for prosthetic items and services.

To improve veterans' access to specialty rehabilitation services, enrolled patients at the VA medical centers can now schedule appointments directly with amputation care and wheelchair clinics, without having to first see a primary care provider.

This means veterans will not have to make an extra appointment and travel to a VA facility for a referral. Direct scheduling is currently available at 137 VA facilities for amputation care and at 124 VA facilities for wheelchair clinics.



Additionally, same-day access for orthotist/prosthetist clinical services is available at 141 VA facilities.

"The dedication and support of the multidisciplinary team of VA employees who are implementing these improvements demonstrate their commitment to do the right thing for our veterans," said Robert Wilkie, Acting Secretary of the VA.

"We are focused on implementing the best solutions to modernize how we deliver rehabilitation and prosthetic services across all VA medical centers — ensuring veterans nationwide are receiving timely and integrated health care and support."

As the largest and most comprehensive provider of prosthetic devices and sensory aids in the country, VA Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service currently averages 638,000 new requests monthly across its health-care system for such items. The service provides a full range of equipment and services to veterans, including artificial limbs and bracing, wheeled mobility and seating systems, sensory-neural aids (e.g., hearing aids, eyeglasses), implants and devices surgically placed in the veteran (e.g., hips and pacemakers), and home respiratory care.

The VA is working to ensure veterans are receiving their medical items, equipment and supplies sooner. Since June 2017, the total number of requests for prosthetic items pending for more than 30 days has been reduced by 72 percent.

As the VA continues to look for modern, simple ways to improve care for America's Veterans, additional process improvements for prosthetic and specialty rehabilitation services will be fully implemented at all VA medical centers in 2018.

SDNG RECOGNIZES INDIVIDUALS MAKING POSITIVE IMPACTS

The South Dakota National Guard's Service Member and Family Support held their annual State Family and Youth Symposium and Awards Banquet in Sioux Falls, March 24-25. The event brought together current and former soldiers, airmen, family members and civilians, all who volunteer in various capacities supporting the SDNG, for a weekend of training and an evening of recognition.

"I want to thank you all for being the heart of our program and for the tremendous support you have given to the South Dakota National Guard, to our service members and their families," said Lt. Col. Brendan Murphy, SDNG's Service Member and Family Support (SMFS) director, to the volunteers attending. "We would not be able to be a world-class organization without you."

Several awards recognizing both service members and civilian volunteers were presented:

Guard Family of the Year: Presented to any active or retired SDNG member and their family that shows outstanding and exceptional service through volunteering to the SMFS Family Readiness Program—SDARNG: The Rodriguez Family of Rapid City and SDANG: The Curley Family Sioux Falls.

Volunteer of the Year: Presented to one Army and one Air Guard volunteer that has shown outstanding and exceptional service to the SMFS Family Readiness Program—Becky Thompson and Courtney Armstrong.

Military Member of the Year: Presented to one Air Guard and one Army Guard military member that shows outstanding and exceptional service to the SMFS Family Readiness Program. Their knowledge and assistance has aided the progression of family readiness within their unit and/or state—SDARNG: Staff Sgt. Kayla Morris, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Rapid City and SDANG: Tech. Sgt. Brittne Bunkers, 114th Force Support Squadron, Sioux Falls.

Family Program Community Purple Award: Presented to a community group or organization that best exemplifies the true meaning of "The Purple" concept of the Joint Family Program by working with both Air and Army Guard—Militiamen Veterans Motorcycle Club (VMC), Flatlander's Chapter - Brookings.

The Gold Award: Presented to a person (can be retired military member from any branch of service or non-military person) showing long-term, consistent, and dedicated support by volunteering with the SDNG Family Readiness Program and within their community—Kristi "Cricket" Palmer, Sturgis.

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SDNG RECOGNITION (CONTINUED)

Youth Volunteer Award: Presented to an Army or Air National Guard youth volunteer (14-18 years old) who exhibits exemplary commitment to and support of the National Guard Youth Program, their school and community. Serves as a role model for military youth—Brianna Neugebauer, Rapid City.

Youth Development Volunteer Award: Presented to any youth program volunteer, regardless of military affiliation, who has made a significant impact in the development and support of the SDNG Youth Program mission—Corey Jennings, Rapid City.

Unit of the Year Award: Presented to an Air Guard and Army Guard unit that shows outstanding and exceptional dedication to the development and progression of Family Readiness within their unit—152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, Pierre.

“This year’s Family and Youth Symposium was a huge success,” Murphy said. “A lot of effort went into providing top quality training and programming for both our adults and our youth that attended.

“We are truly blessed for our amazing volunteer support we continually receive across the state,” Murphy added. “And this annual symposium affords us the opportunity to recognize our behind the scenes heroes that earn the praise and recognition they deserve.”



U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, left, adjutant general of the SDNG, presents Jason Schechterle, a retired Phoenix police officer, with a coin of excellence at the SDNG’s State Family and Youth Symposium in Sioux Falls March 24, 2018. Schechterle, the evening’s keynote speaker, taught and encouraged attendees on managing life’s adversity.

APRIL IS MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

April marks the nation's "Month of the Military Child," a time to honor military youth in communities who have been impacted by deployments, as well as the unique opportunities and challenges that all military children face.

The South Dakota National Guard invites everyone to join in and be part of "Purple Up! For Military Kids Day," being held April 13.

South Dakota schools, communities, businesses and organizations are being encouraged to wear purple on that date as a tangible way to show their support and thank all military children for their strength and sacrifices.

"This is a perfect time to celebrate military children and to recognize their character, strength and resilience," said Taryn Broomfield, SDNG Child and Youth Program lead coordinator.

"Our military youth are impacted daily, whether their service member is home, deployed, at drill, or away attending training or school."

There are more than 7,100 military children in South Dakota with parents or guardians who serve in the National Guard, Reserves and active duty. Of these children and youth, over 3,900 are affiliated with the SDNG.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard demonstrated his support of military kids by signing a proclamation announcing April 2018 as the Month of the Military Child.

Established by Casper Weinberger in 1986, the Month of the Military Child recognizes the important role military children play in our communities. We pause each year to honor the millions of military children for their contributions to their families.

"Military kids are an integral part of our families and communities, and they serve too," said Broomfield. "Please celebrate the military children in your life and thank them."



FOR MORE INFORMATION about Purple Up! For Military Kids Day, please contact Taryn Broomfield, SDNG Child and Youth Program lead coordinator, 605-737-6919, taryn.m.broomfield.ctr@mail.mil

ROUNDS URGES VA TO MAKE TIMELY PAYMENTS TO COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, sent a letter to Acting Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Robert Wilkie to request the VA address its reimbursement process for community providers, and to reimburse old claims dating back to September 30, 2016, and older that the VA has rejected as ineligible.

"According to the VA's policy, claims from September 30, 2016, and older are no longer eligible for reimbursement," wrote Rounds in his letter. "This is disappointing and unacceptable. Community providers deserve to be reimbursed for services provided at the VA's direction, and TPAs [Third Party Administrators] must have clear and simple processes for community providers to follow for prompt payment."

"Despite a strong, patriotic desire to serve veterans, I am concerned that community providers may be reluctant to participate in the next VA community provider network due to their negative past experiences with the Veterans Choice Program. This may, in turn, impact our nation's veterans' ability to access health care, especially rural veterans."

2ND CLASS PORTER RICH BROUGHT HOME TO SD

2nd Class Porter Rich arrived back home last week and was given a heroes salute by friends, family, community leaders, veterans and government officials this past weekend. He was on the SS Oklahoma during the Pearl Harbor attacks, and died at the age of 27.

His remains were unidentified for 75 years and were buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. In 2015, the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed the analysis of the unidentified remains of those victims on the Oklahoma to be investigated further. Scientists were able to identify Rich's remains and bring him back to Lake Preston.

Program Manager Erin Bultje represented SDDVA at this hero's farewell salute.





Veterans for Veterans

ANNUAL POKER RUN

July 7th 2018

MITCHELL DEPOT



Registration

11:00-12:45

\$20 per person

Payback top 3 hands

Silent Auction

1:00- At Depot

**DEPARTS from the
DEPOT 1:00 SHARP!**

Route: Mitchell, Alexandria,
Epiphany, Howard, Letcher,
Mitchell

**FREE T-SHIRT TO FIRST
50 REGISTERED**

Benefiting: Nicole Petrik, wife of
SSG Benjamin Petrik. To assist
with medical cost accrued from a
rare kidney disease.

CONTACT:

Matthew Podhradsky: 350-6890

Jay Schreurs: 630-3214



Veterans Town Hall

with Sioux Falls VA &
Dakotas VA Regional Office Directors

April 12, 2018, 5:00 p.m.

Rm. 514, Lake Area Tech

1201 Arrow Ave. NE

Watertown, SD

Veterans, family members, and area residents are invited.
A benefits fair takes place from 4:00-5:00 p.m. for Veterans
to learn more about VA health care and benefits.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Questions, call 605-333-6889.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 6—Sanford Veterans Center Open House—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Apr 12—VA Veterans Town Hall—Lake Area Tech (1201 Arrow Avenue SD) Watertown—5:00 pm (CT)
Apr 27-29—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
May 11—AHEC Improving Veterans Care Conference—University Center—Sioux Falls
May 11—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)
May 19—MOPH State Convention—DAV Headquarters in Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
May 24-25—PVA Disabled Veterans Fishing Tournament—Chamberlain
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls
Jul 7—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot—1:00 pm (CT)
Jul 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 12—Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Cemetery Grand Opening—Sisseton—11:00 am (CT)
Jul 13 —VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Education Classroom—Fort Meade—10:00 am (MT)
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV
Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO
Jul 26—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 24-30—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN
Sept 14—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Soldiers and Sailors Building—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)
Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)



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